

GLOSSARY OF SWIMMING TERMS

Age Group Swimming – Program through which USA Swimming provides fair and open competition for its younger members. It is designed to encourage maximum participation, provide an educational experience, enhance physical and mental conditioning, and develop a rich base of swimming talent. Nationally recognized age groups are 10 and under, 11-12, 13-14, 15-16, and 17-18. Local events may also include 8 and under.

Block – The starting platform.

Bulkhead – A wall constructed to divide a pool into different courses, such as a 50 meter pool into two 25-yard courses.

Circle Swimming – Performed by staying to the right of the black line when swimming in a lane to enable maximum use of pool space.

Coach – a person who trains and teaches athletes in the sport of swimming.

Code of Conduct – An agreement signed by a swimmer prior to travel or participation stating that the swimmer will abide by certain behavioral guidelines.

Cut – Slang term for qualifying time. A time standard necessary to attend a particular meet or event.

Distance – Term used to refer to events 400 meters/500 yards.

DQ or Disqualification – Occurs when an official observes a rule violation by the swimmer. A disqualified swimmer can not receive awards or use the result as an official time.

Drill – An exercise involving isolation of a portion or part of a stroke, used to improve technique.

Dry Land Training – Training done out of the water. Aids and enhances swimming performance. Usually includes stretching, weight training, and/or calisthenics.

Entry Form – Form on which a swimmer enrolls in a competition. Usually includes USA Swimming number, age, sex, event number, and seed time.

False Start – Occurs when a swimmer is moving at the starting signal. In USA Swimming, one false start will generally result in disqualification.

Final – The championship heat of an event in which the top swimmers from the preliminaries compete.

Finish – The final phase of the race: the touch at the end of the race.

Flags – Pennants strung across the pool 5 yards or meters from the end of the pool. They enable backstrokers to execute a turn more efficiently by counting their strokes from the flags to the wall.

Goal – A specific time achievement a swimmer sets and strives for. Can be short or long-term.

Gutter – The area along the edge of the pool in which water overflows during a race and recirculates through the filtration system.

I.M. – Short for individual medley, an event in which one swimmer swims equal distances of each stroke in the following order: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, and freestyle.

Lap Counter – A set of plastic display numbers used to keep track of laps during a race 500 yards or longer. Also, the person who stands at the opposite end from the start and counts for the swimmer.

Long Course – A 50 meter pool. USA Swimming conducts most summer swimming in long course.

Meet – Competition designed to be a learning experience. By implementing what has been learned in practice, swimmers test themselves against the clock to mark improvement.

Middle Distance – Term used to refer to events of 200 yards/meters to 500 yards/400 meters in length.

National Age Group Top 16 Reportable Times – Time standards set for both short and long course based on previous year's achievements. Times meeting these standards are compiled to make a national list of the fastest age group swimmers each year.

Negative Split – Swimming the second half of the race faster than the first half.

Official – A judge on the deck of the pool at a sanctioned competition who enforces USA Swimming rules. There are stroke and turn judges, administrative officials, starters, timers, and referees.

Pace Clock – Large clock with a large second hand and a smaller minute hand, used to check pace or maintain intervals in practice. May also be digital.

Preliminaries (Prelims) – Races in which swimmers qualify for the finals in the events.

Relay – An event in which four swimmers compete together as a team to achieve one time.

Scratch – To withdraw from an event in a competition.

Senior Swimming – The program through which USA Swimming provides fair and open competition in National Swimming Championships. It is designed to afford maximum opportunity for participation, provide an educational experience, enhance physical and mental conditioning, and develop a pool of talented athletes for Internal Competition. There are no age restrictions on Senior Competition.

Short Course – A pool 25 yards or meters long. USA Swimming conducts most of its winter competition in short course.

Split – A swimmer's intermediate time within a race. Splits are registered every 50 yards or meters and are used to determine if a swimmer is on pace. Under certain conditions, splits may be used as official times. In a relay, the time for one of the four individuals.

Streamline – The position used to gain maximum distance during a start and/or push-off from the wall in which the swimmer's body is as tight as it can be.

Taper – The final preparation phase of a season. Prior to major competition, an older, more experienced swimmer will ease yardage and allow the body to recover. Often during taper, swimmers will shave his/her entire body to reduce resistance, aid in the dissipation of lactic acid, and heighten sensation in the water.

Time Trial – A time-only swim which is not part of a regular meet event.

Touch Pad – A large sensitive board at the end of each lane where a swimmer's touch is registered and automatically sent to the timing system.

USA Swimming – USA Swimming, Inc. The national governing body for amateur competitive swimming in the United States.

Warm Up – Low intensity swimming used by a swimmer prior to a main practice set or race to get muscles loose and warm and gradually increase heart rate and respiration.